

# *Ponderings in the Psalms*

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The following is a Messianic Study on

## *Psalm 36*

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**Brit Chadashah**  
ברית חדשה

The *Pondering* studies were published in the Brit Chadashah Newsletter. Brit Chadashah (*New Covenant*) is a Messianic Fellowship in Sydney. Led by Paul Cohen a Jewish believer in Messiah Yeshua (Jesus). We meet together fortnightly for Bible studies from a Messianic Jewish Perspective. We are a unique fellowship made up of Jewish and Gentile people who are believers in Yeshua as the promised Messiah of Israel.

If you don't know Yeshua as your Messiah, we encourage you to search out the Scriptures for yourself. God promised in the book of Jeremiah, "*You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart*" (Jeremiah 29:13). And we hope you will make contact with us so that we can share more about the Messiah, His life and ministry.

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# Pondering Psalm 36

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## Introduction

Psalm 36 For the choir director. A Psalm of David the servant of the Lord.

### Author and Date

The author is David which gives us an approximate date of about 1000 B.C.E. In the same way as in Psalm 18, David describes himself as the “*servant of the LORD.*” As pointed out before this is the highest accolade in scripture, and was given to Moses, Joshua, David, national Israel, Messiah, Paul and James. It is interesting to note that David never writes a psalm as ‘*David the king,*’ while in contrast, Solomon starts Proverbs with “*Solomon, son of David, king of Israel.*”

It is given to the choir director, so this song was to be sung by Levites and the saints in the Tabernacle, and later in the Temple, and we ought to sing it too (Ephesians 5:19 & Colossians 3:16).

### Genre and Summary

This is a wisdom Psalm, meaning that it gives instructions to the faithful and it is a warning to those who refuse to listen. It can be summarised as contrasting the evil man with the graciousness of God, and further Divine protection and a warning to men.

### The outline

1. Verses 1-4 the transgressions speak to the ungodly
2. Verses 5-9 the graciousness of God
3. Verses 10-12 a prayer for Divine protection and a warning to men

### Verses 1-4 the transgressions speak to the ungodly

<sup>1</sup> Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart;

There is **no fear** of God before his eyes.

<sup>2</sup> For it flatters him in his *own* eyes Concerning the discovery of his iniquity *and* the hatred *of it.* <sup>3</sup> The words of his mouth are wickedness and deceit; He has **ceased to be wise** *and* to do good. <sup>4</sup> He plans wickedness upon his bed; He sets himself on **a path that is not good**; He does **not despise evil.**

The Passion translation has verse 1 as “*The rebellion of sin speaks as an oracle of God, speaking deeply to the conscience of wicked men.*” This may not be the most literal translation, but it does reveal a double meaning of one of the words. Most translations have *speaks* or *says*, but the word נְאֻם (*ne’um*) is translated as *oracle* and that is its usual meaning. The phrase “Thus *says* the Lord” has that same word *ne’um*; so here transgressions speaks (almost prophetically) to the heart of the ungodly. And when it does speak into our lives, we diminish our fear of God to the point that we become brazen. Note how David describes the transgression of the ungodly. It is found in his heart, and in his *own* eyes, then their speech is filled with wickedness and deceit. They plan wickedness, it does not just happen to them, but it is meticulously planned, then he ceases to do good deeds and does not despise evil. The apostle Paul describes the full progression of sinfulness (Romans 1:18-32).

## Verses 5-9 the graciousness of God

<sup>5</sup> Your lovingkindness, O Lord, extends to the heavens, Your faithfulness *reaches* to the skies. <sup>6</sup> Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; Your judgments are *like* a great deep. O Lord, You preserve man and beast. <sup>7</sup> How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings. <sup>8</sup> They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house; And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights. <sup>9</sup> For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light.

In sharp contrast, David now turns to the lovingkindness (*chesed*) of the LORD. We sing “*Hodu l’Adonai ki Tov*” Give Thanks to the Lord, for He is Good! What a contrast this is with the description of mankind for we are not good.

The חֶסֶד (*chesed*) of the LORD... while we have mentioned this before it is worth mentioning again. This word can be translated as **lovingkindness** (JPS, NASB), **mercy** (KJV & Brenton), **grace** (CJB), **steadfast love** (ESV) and as **kindness** (YLT). God often shows *chesed* to the recipients of the Covenants, as such I like the term *covenant faithfulness*. **All** these words are carried in that tiny word *chesed*, which extends beyond measure, just like His אֱמוּנָה (*emunah*) faithfulness and truthfulness. David marks the height of God’s lovingkindness and His faithfulness as beyond our reach.

It is the same with righteousness and judgments. They likewise are beyond our reach. These are not descriptions of significant mountains (*great* KJV or *mighty* JPS), but are the *mountains of God* הַרְרֵי־אֵל (*har’rei-El*). Then in contrast, the *deep* – if this referred only to great mountains then this would be the bottom of the Mediterranean, but the *deep* תְּהוֹמוֹת (*te’hom*) here is the word for the waters that covered the earth (Genesis 1:2, 7:11).

Because of His *chesed* – lovingkindness, we are preserved, *men and beast*. And we are even allowed to take refuge in the shadow of His wings. Does God have wings? No, God is Spirit (John 4:24), but David takes the imagery from the Tabernacle, where the wings covered the mercy-seat (Exodus 25:20). David uses this phrase “*shadow of Your wings*” in Psalms 17:8, 36:7, 57:1 and 63:7; see also Psalm 91:1: *Hide me in the shadow of Your wings*. The Targum (the Aramaic Bible) interprets this as “*under the shadow of Your Shechinah* (Glory) *hide me*,” alluding to the wings of the cherubim which sat on the atonement cover, the mercy seat, the very place where God’s presence dwelt (Exodus 25:22) and where He would meet with Israel.

It is there that the faithful will be satisfied by drinking from the *river of Your delights*; the imagery is rich. The river reaches back to the river in Eden (Genesis 2:10) and forwards to the river which will stream from Jerusalem in the age to come (Psalm 46:4, Revelation 22:1-2). The Hebrew for *delights* is somewhat unusual, for it is the plural of Eden, which was called *delight*. The *fountain of life* is not just with Him, He is the fountain (Jeremiah 2:13). And so too with light, He is the *light of the world* (John 8:12) and apart from Yeshua we walk in darkness. We are led by His Spirit to the paths of the upright.

## Verses 10-12 a prayer for Divine protection and a warning to men

<sup>10</sup> O continue Your lovingkindness to those who know You, And Your righteousness to the upright in heart. <sup>11</sup> Let not the foot of pride come upon me, And let not the hand of the wicked drive me away. <sup>12</sup> There the doers of iniquity have fallen; They have been thrust down and cannot rise.

David's concluding two-fold prayer is for God's lovingkindness to continue, and for protection from the wicked. This is the third time we see the word *chesed* - lovingkindness, may this continue to be upon those who know the LORD, that sustained righteousness might come to those who are upright of heart. Though the heart of men is described as evil (Jeremiah 17:9-10), there was the promise for a circumcised heart (Jeremiah 4:4), and eventually a new heart (Jeremiah 24:7) which enables us to search after God, without guile. In the closing verses David prays for protection from the prideful and the wicked, for they had come against him and had hindered him in the past. So too we ought to pray for the *chesed* of the LORD and His righteousness in our hearts.

David knew that those that practice iniquity will ultimately fall, never to rise again. The *foot of the prideful* is thought to be the foot of a tyrant upon the neck of the saints. The *hand of the wicked* (Job 9:24, Psalm 97:10) was described as the hand of the Adversary, Satan the god of this world (see Rashi on Job 9:24). And while they may come against us, we know that nothing can separate us from the love (*chesed*) of Messiah (Romans 8:35-39).

*Selah*

*Blessings in the Messiah*

*Paul & Sue*